

The house that teens built

Students craft an entire home in career class

By **KATIE LANGFORD**
Katie.Langford@gjsentinel.com

There's a slate-gray house on a quiet street in Pear Park that is nearly ready for new owners. It smells like fresh paint and new carpet. Empty bookshelves surround the fireplace in the living room, waiting to be filled. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms and 1,700 square feet will soon be someone's home.

This house doesn't have owners yet, but it already has a story — imbued by the 72 high-school students who built it from the ground up over the last three years.

The gray house on Wilkins Drive is one of 14 houses in Grand Junction built by high-school students in the construction management class at School District 51's Career Center.

Teacher Mike Wells, a licensed general contractor, said he makes it clear to all potential buyers that the houses are built by teenagers.

"It's always been well-received," Wells said. "They've been amazed that the high-school kids were actually able to accomplish that and to the degree that it's industry standard or better than industry standard."

The construction management program started building houses 21 years ago, when Wells was hired. A \$24,000 private grant kickstarted the house-building aspect of the program.

Construction management



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER TOMLINSON/The Daily Sentinel

Anthony Akey, a student at Fruita Monument High School and in the Career Center building program, installs a dishwasher in a new student-built home at 402 Wilkins Drive in Grand Junction. Below, the finished product is viewed from the street in the Pear Park neighborhood.

is like a three-year apprenticeship, starting with building dog houses and sheds and then laying decks or other projects. Advanced students are on the house crew.

Wells used to schedule the classes so that students built one house every year, which required a lot of private contractors. For this house, Wells decided to extend the timeline so that students could do everything, from the roof and walls to the

tile floors and cabinets.

"This house is different in that the kids got to participate in a lot more of the finishing trades than they've ever been allowed to," he said.

It also presented a new challenge for Wells and his students.

"That was probably one of our biggest challenges ... transitioning from rough carpentry to the finish trades," Wells said.

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Suspect was on NRA-sponsored squad

By **MICHAEL BIESECKER**
and **COLLIN BINKLEY**
Associated Press

The troubled teen authorities say killed 17 people at a Florida high school excelled in an air-rifle marksmanship program supported by a grant from the National Rifle Association Foundation, part of a multimillion-dollar effort by the gun group to support youth shooting clubs and other programs.

Nikolas Cruz, 19, was wearing a maroon shirt with the logo from the Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School when he

FBI ACKNOWLEDGES FAILURE

Florida Gov. Rick Scott called on FBI Director Christopher Wray to resign after discovering that the FBI failed to investigate a tip that the Florida school shooter could have been plotting an attack.

The FBI acknowledged it failed to act on a tip to its hotline that Nikolas Cruz had a "desire to kill."

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio also criticized the FBI separately, saying it was "inexcusable" the FBI did not follow protocols. He said that Congress should launch its own investigations into what happened.

was arrested Wednesday shortly after the shooting. Former JROTC cadets told The Associated Press that Cruz was a member of the small varsity marksmanship team that trained together after class and traveled to other area schools to compete.

It was a close-knit group. One

of the other cadets started calling Cruz "Wolf," and the nickname stuck.

"He was a very good shot," said Aaron Diener, 20, who gave Cruz a ride to shooting competitions when they were part of the same four-member team in 2016. "He had an AR-15 he talked about, and pistols he had

shot. ... He would tell us, 'Oh, it was so fun to shoot this rifle' or 'It was so fun to shoot that.' It seemed almost therapeutic to him, the way he spoke about it."

The JROTC marksmanship program used air rifles special-made for target shooting, typically on indoor ranges at targets the size of a coin.

Records show that the Stoneman Douglas JROTC program received \$10,827 in non-cash assistance from the NRA's fundraising and charitable arm in 2016, when Cruz was on the squad. The school's program publicly thanked the NRA Foundation on its Twitter feed. A spokeswoman for the NRA

declined to comment on Friday. The top officers of the foundation are all current or former executives of the NRA.

The more than 1,700 high school JROTC programs nationally also receive financial support from the U.S. military and are typically supervised by retired officers from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. The military collaborates with school systems on the training curriculum, which includes marching drills, athletic competitions and shooting teams.

Cadets wear military uniforms with ranks and insignias similar to those of the military branch with which they are affiliated.

School threat made at Junction

Boy, 15, admits violent speech

By **GABRIELLE PORTER**
Reporter@gjsentinel.com

A 15-year-old Grand Junction High School student, who allegedly bragged to a fellow student that he "could have done better" than the Florida school shooter who killed "only 17" Wednesday, was quickly taken into custody after authorities were notified of the conversation.

The boy, who has not been identified, was approached by a Grand Junction police officer shortly after a student reported the threats to a school administrator, who passed the conversation along to police at about 12:47 p.m. Thursday, according to the teen's arrest affidavit.

Colorado law prohibits the release of juveniles' names in criminal cases.

The officer spoke to a student, who said the suspect told him over Facebook messenger that the Florida shooting was "weak (expletive)" and "pathetic," the report said.

"There were 'only 17 killed,' 'I could have done better,'" the other student told police, according to the affidavit.

The other student also told the officer that the suspect "has expressed 'fantasies about shooting up schools.'"

The suspect also allegedly described to the other student how he would "get the help of other people and collapse all the entrances to the school and 'mow everybody down,'" the report said. "One of the comments by (the suspect) advised he would cleanse the world of everyone who didn't think like him."

The officer viewed some of the comments on the other student's phone.

The officer contacted the suspect at Grand Junction High School the same day, seizing his iPhone and laptop before meeting with the boy and his parents at the high school for an interview.

The teen allegedly admitted making the comments reported, but told police the only gun he owns is a non-working paintball gun, the report said. However, a person whose name is redacted but who seems to be one of the teen's parents told police he

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13 Russians charged with meddling in presidential vote



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Russian group called "Being Patriotic" purportedly posted this Facebook item about then-candidate Hillary Clinton.

By **ERIC TUCKER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In an extraordinary indictment, the U.S. special counsel accused 13 Russians Friday of an elaborate plot to disrupt the 2016 presidential election, charging them with running a huge but hidden social media trolling campaign aimed in part at helping Republican Donald Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The federal indictment, brought by special counsel Robert Mueller, represents the most detailed allegations to date of illegal Russian meddling during the campaign that sent Trump to the White

House. It also marks the first criminal charges against Russians believed to have secretly worked to influence the outcome.

The Russian organization was funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the indictment says. He is a wealthy St. Petersburg businessman with ties to the Russian government and President Vladimir Putin.

Trump quickly claimed vindication Friday, noting in a tweet that the alleged interference efforts began in 2014 — "long before I announced that I would run for President."

"The results of the election were not impacted. The Trump cam-

paign did nothing wrong — no collusion!" he tweeted.

But the indictment does not resolve the collusion question at the heart of the continuing Mueller probe, which before Friday had produced charges against four Trump associates. U.S. intelligence agencies have previously said the Russian government interfered to benefit Trump, including by orchestrating the hacking of Democratic emails, and Mueller has been assessing whether the campaign coordinated with the Kremlin.

The latest indictment does not focus on the hacking but instead centers on a social media propa-

ganda effort that began in 2014 and continued past the election, with the goal of producing distrust in the American political process. Trump himself has been reluctant to acknowledge the interference and any role that it might have played in propelling him to the White House.

The indictment does not allege that any American knowingly participated in Russian meddling, or suggest that Trump campaign associates had more than "unwitting" contact with some of the defendants who posed as Americans

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